

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING



PUBLIC SPACE APPLICATION REVIEW

DATE: August 9, 2010
FROM: Joshua Ghaffari, Citywide Planner
ADDRESS: 1700 1st Street NW
APPLICATION: Unenclosed sidewalk café for 20 tables and 58 seats

Site Information

Zone: R-4
Historic District: No
CFA: No
Neighborhood Character: Residential

Background:

This application was received by the Office of Planning on August 3, 2010. This café is for the adjacent Big Bear Cafe. This site has a pending case for re-zoning with the Zoning Commission that is requesting that the site be rezoned from R-4 to C-2-A. No date has been set, but it will likely be held sometime this Fall.

Relevant Policies of Planning Initiatives

Policy T-2.4.4: Sidewalk Obstructions

Locate sidewalk cafes and other intrusions into the sidewalk so that they do not present impediments to safe and efficient pedestrian passage. Maintain sidewalk surfaces and elevations so that disabled or elderly pedestrians can safely use them. 410.8

Policy UD-3.1.8: Neighborhood Public Space

Provide urban squares, public plazas, and similar areas that stimulate vibrant pedestrian street life and provide a focus for community activities. Encourage the “activation” of such spaces through the design of adjacent structures; for example, through the location of shop entrances, window displays, awnings, and outdoor dining areas.

Policy UD-3.10: Sidewalk Cafes

Discourage the enclosure of sidewalk cafes in manner that effectively transforms them into indoor floor space. The design of sidewalk cafes should be compatible with the architectural qualities of the adjoining buildings, should complement the street environment, and should not impede pedestrian movement.

KEY ISSUES

The property is located in the Bloomingdale neighborhood on 1st Street, NW, between R Street and Randolph Place, NW. It is located in an area zoned R-4. There is low level of pedestrian activity during working hours and at other times. This neighborhood is predominantly characterized as residential.

The sidewalk where the café is proposed is located along R Street and is 24’-6” wide. The adjacent business has no shop window projection. There are 4 feet at the curb set aside for tree boxes and

other street furniture. This leaves 20'-6'' feet to accommodate for pedestrians and café seating. The proposed seating area includes 14 tables and 6 benches for a total of 58 seats in an area that is 463 square feet.

The café area extends into the sidewalk 14'-6''. This leaves 6 feet of unobstructed sidewalk between the café and the 4 foot furniture zone at the curb. District regulations require a 10' clear pedestrian path adjacent to a sidewalk café, although the Public Space Committee has the authority to approve an adjacent clear pedestrian path of 6 feet. In this predominantly residential setting, the typical sidewalk width is 6 feet.

The Public Space Committee requires that there be 15 square feet for every seat within a dining area. With an area of 463 square feet, this sidewalk café has enough space for 31 seats; the application is for 58 seats.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

Sidewalk cafes are one of the few ways that the District can activate public space in commercial areas. Wherever possible, the Office of Planning supports sidewalk cafes in public space. However, the applicant needs to reduce the number of proposed seats in accordance with the available square footage. The proposed café is in a predominantly residential area, and 6 feet clear adjacent sidewalk is adequate to handle existing and anticipated pedestrian traffic.

The Office of Planning recommends that this application be approved with the condition that the maximum number of seats be reduced to 31.